

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Kurtis Rourke

Press Conference



Q. Is Coach Shanahan's play calling approach in the red zone different from offensive coordinators you've had in the past? Is he more aggressive?

KURTIS ROURKE: I think it depends on the strengths of the offense and, you know, what -- how we can attack him best that week.

I really like Coach Shanahan's mindset and the way he approaches different plays and, you know, one of the reasons why I wanted to come here in the first place, and so definitely the way that he calls plays and our red zone success is attributed to that. Coach has definitely played a big part in that.

Q. You guys have not been shy this year talking about the expectations that you have for yourselves, but were there any moments, whether it's spring, summer, preseason, during the season when you kind of looked around and it went from ambition to confidence, just sort of saying, We believed we can do this and now I know we can do this and now I know we're the kind of team that can reach that stage and play at that level?

KURTIS ROURKE: I would say kind of the first, second week of fall camp, honestly. We had a lot of new pieces in the spring, so trying to understand the offense and trying to understand the way everything works and understand the players around each other and stuff.

So it was tough in the spring a couple times with just getting time and chemistry and all of that, and then progressing through the summer and get to go fall camp, we hit stride and we're playing against one of the best defenses in the league, and we knew that, they were going to be really good this year.

And so when we started to move ball on them and make some plays, I think that built confidence in ourselves knowing that we can execute at such a high level against a really good defense.

And so that just continued on, and as the season went on

we just really built confidence every week.

Q. Looks like it might snow in South Bend on Friday. What did you learn about facing Purdue, throwing in the snow, managing that during the game, and do you have much experience of that from when you were at Ohio?

KURTIS ROURKE: I actually never played in snow, like when it was actually snowing. I definitely played in some cold games in my college career. Played at Buffalo last year. That was not fun. I always try to keep the mindset of not letting the environment affect me and going out and execute and playing.

If I feel comfortable enough in what I'm wearing, there shouldn't be any issue in everything moving forward. I thought Purdue was a really awesome environment, having the snow fall down in the stadium. That was pretty cool. Snow games are pretty fun itself. Looking forward to it if that's the case.

Q. How do you balance looking forward to the game and being a sixth year game and soaking in the moment for what could be your final college football game?

KURTIS ROURKE: Answering your question, I really have cherished this year, cherished all my years in college. Just knowing this could be the last possible college game definitely comes to my mind but also I'm taking it as a positive and motivating, that it's one more chance to have a great opportunity to play with the guys and this team that's been so successful.

Just really using it to motivate me even more than I already have to go out there, have fun, enjoy it. We'll talk about my last college game in four games.

Q. It's been decades since Indiana and Notre Dame have played, whether it's in the building on campus in the community, do you sense a buzz about renewing this rivalry on such a big stage?

KURTIS ROURKE: I think so. This game comes with a lot



of things, in-state rival, and being the first game of the Playoff. Those things combined create a lot of buzz and excitement both inside the building and outside. I know we are excited to get ready and going.

Q. What do you like about this offense? What makes it effective? And how much freedom do you have to change plays a little bit, a lot? Can you totally go 180 degrees left if you think the defense is vulnerable to that?

KURTIS ROURKE: Yeah, I think this offense really excels because we have so many different options. We're very versatile. We've got a lot of different playmakers that we can just give the ball to in play and be able to rotate in for more playmakers.

One of the deepest offenses in the country and guys that are always fresh and always ready to go, and it's just my job to throw and give the ball.

And so I think that's one of the big reasons why this offense is so successful.

And then I know in Purdue, I had a couple opportunities to change the play, just kind of completely wipe it. But for the most part, pretty confident that we have answers against any coverage, any look, based on the play that's called.

Q. A few times you've been sacked this season, it's been unidentified blitzers or late blitzers. With a team like Notre Dame that's very blitz heavy, have you worked on pre-snap reads and call-outs?

KURTIS ROURKE: For sure. We've worked on a lot of ditch blitz looks, basically everything they have done this year, and we'll be very prepared to handle anything that they throw at us.

Q. What makes Zach an important part of the offense, and I guess what's his off-field locker room presence?

KURTIS ROURKE: Yeah, he's awesome. He's one of those guys that will give 110 percent every single game, every single play. He works harder than anybody I know. I remember watching him when I first got here when he was at JMU and just wanting to play with a guy like that because he's definitely some would say undersized for a tight end but he makes his presence known for sure and everyone on this team just really wants to play for him and be on same team. He's just a fun guy to be around outside, off the field, as well.

Q. One of the things Mike Shanahan said is that the Irish kind of resemble OSU. Obviously that was a

showing you all want to have happen again. When you look back on that, what are the similarities there and how do you guys want to approach this?

KURTIS ROURKE: I think Notre Dame is a very talented team and Ohio State is also very talented and they do a lot of good things and have been able to make some plays on defense and turn the ball over, or turn other teams over. It's been tough for some offenses to move the ball and that's similar in what they do.

I think we left some things out there at Ohio State, and things that have been corrected, and so going into Notre Dame, we're really just looking forward to executing at our level and the way that we know how to.

Q. Kind of a two-part question, what does it mean to you to represent Canada on the football field? And also, as part of that, how did you -- how is football your path? And what did it mean to you the other day to finish in the Top-10 in the Heisman Trophy voting?

KURTIS ROURKE: Football in Canada is definitely rising but it's been hard to get exposure coming out of high school. So very lucky that my brother was excelling at Ohio already, so I had a foot in the door already and just an opportunity to show what I can do.

But obviously growing up in Canada, playing the Canadian football rules and all that stuff, so that was a lot of fun.

Just being able to be a Canadian player and knowing that I'm able to motivate and help the younger generation in showing that you can make it to different levels and that you can excel at different levels, I'm glad to be that part and hopefully I can be a good role model to a lot of aspiring Canadians, as well.

Just going off of that, just really blessed and honored and thankful just to be in the conversation and be in the Top-10 in the Heisman. A year ago around this time, I committed to come here, and I never would have thought that I could be in the Top-10, and so that's just -- it means a ton. It's a tribute to everything, the coaches and the players around me to help me get to that point, get to this point, and just ready to continue this journey on.

Q. I know when you committed to Indiana, you said that you weren't even sure you were going to play college football. Have you had any moments along the way where you've stopped to think how close all of this came to never actually happening? And how does that perspective change the way you think about the opportunity that's before you this week?

KURTIS ROURKE: Yeah, you know, going back to a year ago and deciding to see what was out there in the transfer portal and then deciding if I wanted to do that or go to the draft and kind of just bet on myself in that way, you know, looking back, I'm glad I made the decision to come here.

But it just showed me and put into perspective how amazing God is and that His plan always turns out for good in the end, no matter what it is.

So just trusting Him no matter what, and that whatever happens this week, that, you know, I gave it my all and I play for His glory and all and just be grateful that I'm able to be playing a sixth year at Indiana against Notre Dame.

Yeah, just very grateful.

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